

RECREATION FEE DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM



Congress first authorized the Recreation Fee Demonstration (Fee Demo) Program in 1996 as a three-year pilot program. The National Park Service (NPS), U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and the Fish and Wildlife Service are the four federal agencies participating. Originally scheduled to run from 1997 to 1999, the program was modified in 1998 and extended for another two years through 2001. The NPS has until the end of FY 2004 to obligate the money collected.

The primary reasons that Congress established the program were: to address the federal agencies' multi-billion dollar maintenance backlogs, to reverse the deteriorating scope and quality of visitor services at federal facilities, to address natural and cultural resource issues, and to provide the additional funds needed to stem the deterioration of the resources, services, and recreational opportunities managed by the agencies.

UserFee

improves this park

Grand Canyon National Park is authorized to keep up to 80% of most fees collected. This includes money generated from entrance fees, backcountry and river permits, commercial tour fees for vehicles and aircraft, campground fees, golden eagle and golden age passports, and a few other miscellaneous fees. Concessions fees are not part of this program.

The remaining 20% of the money goes into a servicewide pool that other park units compete for. Prior to the establishment of the Fee Demo program, fee money collected was returned to the general fund of the federal government. Parks were only reimbursed for their collection costs.

The actual amount of Fee Demo program money returned to the park to date is approximately \$6,000,000 in FY 1997, \$17,600,000 in FY 1998, and \$19,100,000 in FY 1999. The park expects to receive an additional \$19,000,000 for each of the next two fiscal years. The total funds for five years of the program will be approximately \$80,700,000. The park must pay for the cost of fees collected out of the 80% of fees received. This amounts to approximately \$2,000,000 per year, therefore, the net available for project work is estimated to be approximately \$72,700,000 over the remaining four years of the program.

The most significant fee project funded so far is the construction of Canyon View Information Plaza, the new visitor transit/orientation center at Mather Point on the South Rim. Canyon View Information Plaza will be the first place most visitors will go after entering the park. Once there they will experience their first view of the Grand Canyon and encounter a menu of activities with which to plan a visit to the park. Convenient access to the transit system will free them from their personal vehicles and give them more time to enjoy the Grand Canyon. Fee demo funds for this project total approximately \$18,000,000.

Another significant project that will soon be underway is the construction of the Heritage Education Campus. Approximately \$17,000,000 of Fee Demo monies will be used to construct a new South Rim Maintenance and Transit Facility, allowing for the relocation of concession maintenance opera-

NEW NPS MAINTENANCE SHOP/OFFICE BUILDING



tions. The area, currently used by the concessioner for maintenance, warehouse, and livery functions, will be converted into the Heritage Education Campus. The powerhouse, stables, laundry, and community building, all National Register structures, will be renovated by the Grand Canyon National Park Foundation. To facilitate this work, Fee Demo funds will be used to construct the new NPS maintenance facility on the South Rim. Once this is completed, the concessioner will move their operation out of the historic district and into the facility vacated by the NPS making way for the creation of this magnificent education facility for visitors and fill a long standing void in Grand Canyon Village for these types of visitor services.

Presently in the planning stage is a project that addresses a very important concern for most visitors, the availability of clean and conveniently located restrooms. Existing restrooms will be repaired, rehabilitated, and modified where needed to meet the Americans with Disabilities Act accessibility requirements. New restrooms have already been constructed and others are planned in popular locations where no permanent facilities now exist. Overall 16 existing units will be rehabbed, three units will be replaced with new structures, and approximately 17 new structures constructed.

Completed Fee Demo projects to date include:

- construction of the primary facilities for Canyon View Information Plaza (FY 2001)
- modifications of the South Entrance Station to provide a new prepaid pass lane (FY 1997)
- construction of new restrooms at Roaring Springs (FY 1999) and Desert View (FY 2001)
- construction of a new Emergency Services Building at Desert View (FY 2001)
- upgrades to the new Curatorial Research and Storage Facility (FY 1999)
- several miscellaneous backcountry trail rehabilitation and resource protection projects (FY 2000)
- rehabilitation of the Tusayan Museum Office Building (FY 2000)
- implementation of a Preventive Search and Rescue Program for the inner canyon (FY 1998)

Approximately 40 other projects are in various stages of planning, design, construction, or approval. They will address a multitude of ills within the park. Funds will be used to repair and rehabilitate historic structures, such as the Ranger Operations Building and the Yavapai Observation Station. Old utility systems will be repaired, such as those at Phantom Ranch and the North Rim. Visitor and employee safety problems will be addressed through projects to remove hazard trees, development of an integrated pest management program, construction of new emergency services facilities, repair of walkways, and condition assessment of facilities.



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